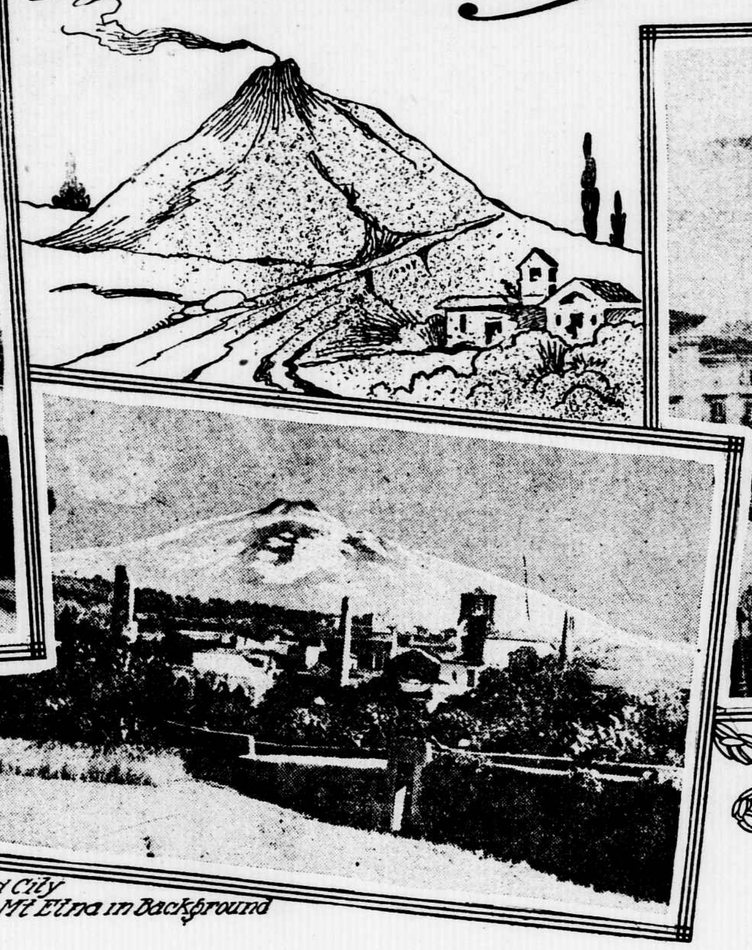
The LAND of RUIN

Noted Arch Palermo Sicily Overturned by Earthquake



Destroyed City Catania Mt Etna in Background

Famous Cathedral in Messina Ruined by Earthquake

City of Taormina destroyed Roman Ruins in Foreground

ITALIAN COUNTIES AND SICILY, THE ISLAND KINGDOM, WHERE QUAKE, FIRE AND FLOOD HAVE WROUGHT THE GREATEST CATASTROPHE OF MODERN HISTORY—THE CITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES AND WHOLE SECTIONS WHICH WERE VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT.

THE country which is today and must for months continue to be of constant interest to all the world is that section of the fair Italian southern country and that island of historic memories, Sicily, which were involved in the Titanic grasp of the earthquake of December 27 and 28.

Americans are disposed to look on this land as of slight importance and noted mostly for poverty and its crop of emigrants to this more favored land of the west; yet Calabria, in the toe of the Italian peninsula, and Sicily have figured largely on the pages of European history. Poetry and prose literature have rung with their praises.

Perhaps no section of the earth combines fertility with beauty more divinely than this poor, scourged country of classic legend, medieval romance and haughty nobles grouped around with their thousands of impoverished but usually beautiful peasants. The town of Messina in the middle ages was one of the prizes of Europe, and many battles were fought by dukes, kings and even emperors to obtain possession of it. It is the chief background of Shakespeare's famous comedy, "Much Ado About Nothing," and to the student of history and especially of literature Messina is a name to conjure up a thousand memories sublime and rare.

The crunch, crunch of the earthquake toppled practically every building in the country involved, and red-tongued fire swept the piles of debris, licking up all combustible material in the ruins, and ending the lives of tens of thousands of mangled, imprisoned unfortunates caught within the intricacies of the devastated buildings. On the seacoast tidal waves, variously estimated from thirty to sixty feet in height, plunged up on the shelving sea beaches and washed miles inland, wiping out all vestige in many cases of the country ever having been inhabited by the courageous animal, man.

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But it is of Messina, Reggio di Calabria, as being the metropolis of that devoted province; Catania, Catanzaro, Taormina and Palermo that most should be related. Even if Italian indomitability reconstruct in a score of years some pretense of cities on these historic sites, the towns of medieval times haloed about with mystery, poetry and romance have gone down forever like veritable structures of mist under the mighty shaking nature inflicted.

Legend sets forth that ill-fated Messina was founded by pirates in the eighth century before the Christian era, or just a few years before Romulus is alleged to have started digging a trench where the imperial city of Rome now stands. So Rome and Messina were founded about the same period—Messina by pirates and Rome by a band of highwaymen and robbers.

Since it was founded Messina has passed through an unparalleled career, during which the town has been devastated by conflagrations, the plague, wars and frequent small earthquakes, which occasionally amounted to considerable damage. But the last far exceeded the damage wrought by all previous disasters combined.

In 1783 Messina was given a terrible earthquake shock, which destroyed many of her public buildings, but the city soon reared new structures. One of the few world-famous buildings that disappeared in the total destruction in December was the cathedral, which was a noble structure founded by Count Roger of Messina, one of the heroic figures of Sicilian history, away back in 1098, or just after William the Norman conquered England at the battle of Hastings.

The cathedral, or La Matrice, retained the general style of Gothic architecture, but only the portals of the facades were actually built away back in the eleventh century in the awakening dawn of modern European history. These portals to the facade showed marvelous carvings in solid stone, relics of dead and gone architecture never to be restored now, and worth untold wealth to the student and lover of art. La Matrice also contained a sculptured marble pulpit that was historic and a statue of St. Jerome by Gagini. Mosaics dating back to within 100 years of the founding of the edifice have perished forever now.

With a sickle-shaped harbor, Messina ranked fourth among the cities of Italy in commercial importance. The views across the Messina straits were magnificent, and fortunately the views at least remain, although now terror-inspiring in their aspect.

The building of most interest to tourists in Messina was the Villa Rocca Guelfonia, built by the Normans, who controlled Messina and Sicily at the time Richard the Lion Hearted, King of England, sailed for his first crusade against the Turks and failed to release Jerusalem, the Holy city, from infidel dominion. There was also a creditable museum in the convent of St. Gregory, which had fine paintings, statuary and some rare majolica vases.

As a business town Messina was the most important city of Sicily, and, in fact, in the south of the kingdom of Italy. It did an annual export and import business of about $20,000,000. It traded principally in fruits and in fruit flavorings and essences, in coral ornaments, silks, wines, oils, muslin, linen and hardware—the last three articles clearly being brought in to supply the demand of the island population.

Messina had a fair university and a well equipped technical school, and was the center of success in southern Italy and Sicily. Its destruction cannot be reckoned but as a deathblow to prosperity in all that portion of the kingdom. It had a population of 150,000.

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The once thriving city of Reggio di Calabria was almost directly opposite to Messina across the quake-tortured Straits of Messina. It is said to have been founded a couple of centuries later than Messina, but, as a matter of fact, all these dates are purely imaginary—not authentic nor historic. Its very name means "to break," and refers to an origin through an earthquake—that is, Reggio, now a seaport, was said to have been founded as an inland city, but awoke one fine day to discover that an earthquake had opened the earth and created the Straits of Messina and made Reggio into a seaport. Reggio was the chief town of Calabria Ulterior. It was noted for a superb cathedral about a century old, a famous statue of Garibaldi, a museum, a lyceum for girls and a technical school.

In Sicily, Palermo is the largest city, with a population of nearly 350,000, and it belongs almost in the class of the world's largest cities and is certainly of second rank as regards population. It was not much injured, although the earth shocks were distinctly felt. It is 120 miles west of Messina. It contains many art objects of great value, and is noted for a university which numbers about 1,400 students. The city possesses a great cathedral, surrounded by sixteen gigantic holy statues, and a Norman structure, built in 1145, with five imposing domes, called the San Giovanni Degli Eremeti, which is one of the unique specimens of architecture in the world, as it shows the effect of the crusades on the stern Gothic structures of the true Norman style and period.

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Girgenti is about eighty-four miles southeast of Palermo. It is noted for its fine cathedral, which was constructed in A. D. 1400, and we had a consulate here because the town had a population of over 25,000. The cathedral contained a celebrated Madonna by Guido Reni and a famous marble tomb, with relief, illustrating the legend of Hyppolytus. There were several royal educational institutions and a municipal museum that contained a marvelous statue of Apollo. It exported 3,000,000 quintals of sulphur annually, and had, as well, important salt mines.

Monteleone di Calabria was a small town in Catanzaro, situated about two miles from the coast, and was built on a hill where in times of ancient Greece there was situated the city of Hipponium. It was a garrison town and the see of a bishopric. It also disappeared in 1783, when so many other southern Italian cities were destroyed by earthquake, but was rebuilt for military purposes by the Neapolitan government.

Catanzaro was the capital of the province of that name and had a fine cathedral, a big hospital and a population of 25,000, mostly very poor and very ignorant. Palmi was in Calabria, twenty-one miles northeast of Reggio, the capital, and is near Mount Elia, from which a superb view of the surrounding territory can be obtained. It had a population approximating 14,000. Pizzo had a population of 8,000 and lay five miles to the north and east of Monteleone, on the Gulf of Santa Eufenia. Bagnara, one of the smaller cities mentioned as being practically wiped off the map, was on the coast of the Gulf of Gioja and had 6,000 people.

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Catania was built on one of the furthest roots of Mount Etna, and was an ancient city mentioned frequently by Thucydides, Livy, Pausanias, Pindar and Plutarch. In Cicero's writings he says, speaking of the war in Sicily: "You will be told of the fields of the Catanians—a most wealthy people and friendly to us (Romans)." Thus Cicero relates to us that in his time Catania was an important city of the old world, and its population considered a wealthy agricultural community.

But if the cities, towns and provinces involved in the mighty earth throes in December were historic, no less so were the waters of this country famous in Grecian and Roman prose and poetry. Scylla and Charybdis, the names of the two rocky promontories that faced each other across the Straits of Messina before the last earth convulsion changed the map of that region, were sung by Homer and all his followers and imitators who were legion in number and Greek, Roman, English and French in nationality. Ulysses had his adventure with the cyclops between Messina and Catania, in Sicily.

In fact, away ahead of the Normans and the medieval legends connected with this region there lies the period of prehistoric Greek verse, lost in the mazes of the earliest dawn of man as an intelligent being. Back before the days of blind Dan Homer, back among the very gods of the Greeks when the Golden Age was here and the gods walked with one another on the earth and made love to the daughters of men, Calabria and Sicily were the favored regions of all the world, a glory preserved eternally by the genius of poet and historian.

MENDELSSOHN

CENTENARY OF THE FAMOUS GERMAN MUSICIAN

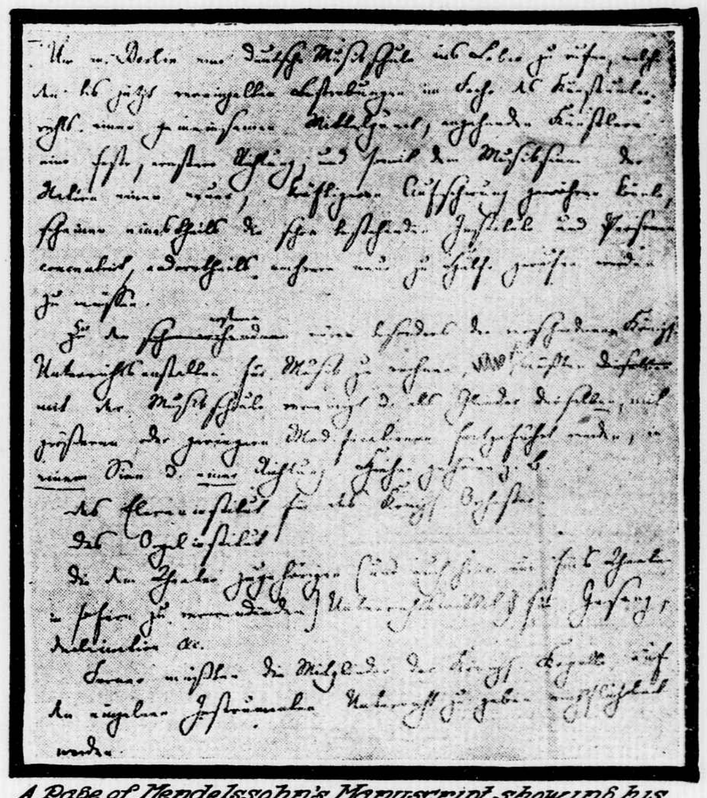
Mendelssohn in his Prime

The Hand of Mendelssohn

Profile of Mendelssohn

Cecile Mendelssohn Wife of the Famous Composer

Mendelssohn as he Appeared in Death



A Page of Mendelssohn's Manuscript showing his Peculiar Handwriting

THE year 1909, a year of notable centennials, holds two that are of pre-eminent significance to musicians and the entire music-loving world. February 3 occurs the centenary of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy — known to the world at large as Mendelssohn—and a date but a few weeks later, or March 1, to be exact, marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Frederic Chopin. Both of these composers have by their work made deep impress upon the history of music, but the achievements of Mendelssohn perhaps stand out as the more pretentious and the present centennial will serve to not only draw popular attention to the composer of the "Spring Song" and other masterpieces, but will also emphasize his unusual personality and remarkable career.

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At the very outset of this glimpse of Mendelssohn's life it may be well to explain his acquisition of the name Bartholdy—an appendix which has been responsible for many perplexing mistakes on the part of music lovers and others. The grandfather of the composer, Moses Mendelssohn, was the greatest Jewish teacher and thinker of his time, and his son, Abraham, father of the composer, was scarcely less notably successful as a banker. The latter married Miss Solomon, an exceptionally fine amateur musician, and it was through her influence that the family drifted away from the Jewish faith. Her brother, a man of great wealth and influence, had become converted to the Christian church and had taken the name of Bartholdy. He induced his brother-in-law to follow his example, and accordingly all the children, including Felix, were baptized in the Lutheran church and adopted the name Bartholdy.

The famous composer was born in Hamburg, but a couple of years later his parents removed to Berlin. From the time the child was old enough to comprehend anything about music, his mother, who, as above explained, was very talented, commenced his systematic instruction, beginning with lessons of only five minutes a day, which interval was gradually increased. From early youth Felix and the other children were instructed both in pianoforte and violin, and the youngster who was to develop into the great composer of his day made his first public appearance in Berlin when only nine years of age. When little Felix was barely eleven years of age he entered the Berlin Academy, and almost from that very day he made attempts at musical composition. Ere he had reached his twelfth birthday anniversary he had composed no less than fifty complete movements, including a cantata and a comedy in three scenes.

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When Mendelssohn was but seventeen years of age he composed the famous overture to the "Midsummer Night's Dream," which the critics of all time have been unanimous in pronouncing the most remarkable example of musical precocity in the history of the world. A year later the boy's first opera was produced at the Grand Opera House in Berlin and met with pronounced success. When little past twenty years of age Mendelssohn was offered the chair of music at the Berlin University, but declined, and about this time undertook a concert tour of England, where he was hailed as one of the great composers and pianists of the day. This experience was followed by concert tours of Scotland, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and France.

When the composer was twenty-four years of age he accepted an offer of the position of conductor of the Lower Rhine music festival, and so favorable was the impression made by the young musician that he was immediately appointed town musical director of Dusseldorf, at the impressive salary of $450 a year, which seems to have been quite acceptable to him. This post served as a stepping stone to that of conductor of the famous Gewandhus Orchestra in Leipzig. He made this organization the foremost orchestra in Europe, and the people of Leipzig became more than enthusiastic over Mendelssohn and his work.

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In the year 1837, when Mendelssohn was twenty-eight years of age, he was married to Cecile Charlotte Sophie Jeanrenaud, a very beautiful girl, the daughter of a French Protestant clergyman. The domestic life of the couple was ideal, the composer manifesting in his home few of those eccentricities which have made so many a musical genius a trying life partner. Nor was his home life by any means care free, for in time five children joined the household, and the health of Mendelssohn's wife was not always of the best. It is recorded that the composer not only instructed his children in music, but also taught them such fundamental branches as reading, spelling and geography.

When he had been married about four years the emperor invited Mendelssohn to Berlin to conduct the orchestral and choral concerts. That professional jealousy which is ever the bane of the musical world made this portion of his career a path of thorns and he finally announced his intention to resign. Thereupon the emperor, who was very fond of him, induced him to remain and organize a choir at the cathedral. This he did so successfully that the monarch appointed him royal general musical director. A year later he organized the Leipzig conservatory, and in 1844 he conducted the London Philharmonic concerts. Two years later he made his ninth and last visit to England, where he had attained, if anything, greater popularity than in Germany, and conducted at Birmingham the first performance of "The Elijah," which composition ranks with "St. Paul" as his greatest work.

When Mendelssohn returned to Leipzig from this English tour the effect of the culmination of years of overwork began to make itself distressingly manifest and he was obliged to resign his conductorship of the orchestra and his position at the conservatory. Then came the shock of the news of the death of Mendelssohn's favorite and very talented sister, Fanny Hensel, and this blow, coming but a few years after the death of his mother, of whom he was very fond, seemed crushing in effect and the composer went into a rapid decline, his death occurring November 4, 1847, at the comparatively early age of thirty-eight years.

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The career of Mendelssohn was almost unique in that he did not have to suffer the privations and hardships which seem to have been the lot of almost every musical genius in early youth. The son of wealthy and indulgent parents, he never faced poverty or serious self-denial, and it is not unlikely, as has frequently been suggested, that this happy childhood was largely responsible for the marvelous creative power which the composer displayed in his earliest musical work. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in early youth Mendelssohn manifested literary talent only slightly less remarkable than his musical ability. When scarcely a dozen years of age he wrote letters that would have done credit to a young man of twice his years, and his unusual attainments in this direction could not be better proven than by the fact that he greatly interested the Poet Goethe, who became one of his closest friends. Goethe always declared that Mendelssohn's performances were infinitely superior to those of Mozart at the same age.

Not only could Mendelssohn work or idle as fancy dictated, but he had in his own home the facilities that invariably prove a boon to struggling musical genius. The best musical instruments of the period were, of course, provided, and the dining room of the Bartholdy mansion was admirably adapted for use as a concert hall. Indeed, a concert was held there regularly each week, and young Felix's compositions were thus played before sympathetic audiences as rapidly as they were completed. As the young composer progressed his father considered the advisability of having him round out his musical education in Paris, but after visiting the French capital decided that the Teuton atmosphere was best.

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Mendelssohn, although during much of his life was not in the most robust health, was very fond of travel. He especially enjoyed Italy, but England always held the first place in his affections. For while he pronounced London "a smoky nest," he confessed that it was ever his "favorite residence." Perhaps this liking was partly due to the enthusiastic acclaim with which Mendelssohn was always greeted in the tight little isle. The appreciation of Mendelssohn in England, which speedily grew to virtual idolatry, was the more marked because contrasted with the skeptical coldness of the audiences of Berlin. And in turn we find that some measure of Mendelssohn's instantaneous success in the British metropolis was due to the fact that, though a musician, he was a "gentleman," the definition of which in this case was that being a man of means he did not demand pay for his playing or conducting, which circumstance placed him in the eyes of the thrifty Britishers on a pinnacle far above those less fortunate musicians who must derive livelihood from their art.

From the above reference to the apathy of Berlin, it may be suspected that Mendelssohn, despite the almost uninterrupted success and his freedom from care about money matters did not pass through his comparatively brief career without some heartburnings. Aside from the lethargy of Berlin there was the circumstance that Mendelssohn was never as successful as he desired in operatic composition, and some of the criticisms which assailed his operas stung him to the quick. No mention of Mendelssohn's life in England would be at all adequate without reference to his friendship for Jenny Lind. The famous songstress fulfilled his ideal of an artist, and it was for her that he wrote his greatest choral work, "Elijah."

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It is a sad commentary on Mendelssohn's career in Great Britain that the very triumph he achieved was indirectly his undoing. He became the "lion" of the hour and was feted far beyond the capacity of a frail physique, already weakened by overwork. The sequel of this high-tension social life was that he became a victim of nervous exhaustion as his father had been before him, and also his beloved sister. In the end he was afflicted with headaches so severe that he could not tolerate the slightest noise—not even, as though an irony of fate, the sound of a piano.

When the composer of "Songs Without Words" died his body was taken from Leipzig to Halle for interment and the funeral was most impressive. It took place at night and thousands of the citizens participated in a torchlight procession from the composer's home to the railroad station. At each town or village through which the funeral train passed the cortege was greeted by chorales chanted by choruses of admiring musicians. Many stories are told of Mendelssohn, illustrative of his distinctive personality. Not a few of them are based on the tricks of his marvelous memory. It is related that on one occasion, when the score of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" overture was lost, the composer, without hesitancy, prepared another, which corresponded with the original in the minutest detail. He knew the classics by heart. This remarkable memory rendered possible that skill in improvising in which Mendelssohn excelled. This German composer stands apart from many great musicians in that he won popularity and homage during his lifetime, and this prestige has, if anything, been enhanced since his death.

FIVE MINUTES WITH PROMINENT STORY TELLERS

A Novel Bath.

MAYOR REYBURN of Philadelphia at a recent civic banquet praised the city's water supply.

"I remember," he said, "we all remember, the time when the mildest storm would make our water unfit to bathe in, let alone to drink."

"The only man in those days who could ever find a good word to say for our water," he resumed, 'was Peter Burness, the optimist of the court of quarter sessions.

"'Actually,' I said to Peter one morning after a storm, 'I couldn't take a bath today on account of the muddy water. It was like brown paste.'

"'Oh, I took a good long bath,' said Peter. 'When the Schuylkill water is like that it is the best fluid in the world to bathe in. So medicinal, you know. Better than Homburg or Marienbad or any of those places.'

"'But it's so muddy,' said I.

"'That's just the point,' said Peter. 'It's medicinal mud, full of all sorts of phosphates and things. Tonight when you get home fill your bath, jump in and splash about; but afterward don't use any towels.'

"'No towels?' I objected.

"'There's a much better way than towels,' said Peter. 'Stand before the radiator and let the water dry on your body. Then brush it off with a whisk broom.'"

Only an Excuse.

"THE late Claus Spreckels," said a San Franciscan, "had one weakness of which he was a little ashamed. He could not resist the appeal of a beggar. Yet he knew that the charity societies are right, and that most beggars are impostors.

"'Have the moral courage of your convictions,' I said one day, as I saw him give a beggar a quarter. 'Send these fellows to the charity specialists for investigation.'

"'Moral courage!' Mr. Spreckels murmured. 'That is what we call on when we contemplate a mean action.'

"A school teacher once told her class that the courage which makes us do what we think right, regardless of the sneers of others, was moral courage, the best kind.

"'Then, if a boy has a box of candy, like me yesterday,' said a lad, 'and if he eats it all himself, without giving any to people that have no right to it, no matter how much they call him mean and stingy—that there's moral courage, ain't it, teacher?'

A Royal Connoisseur.

JAMES B. LAUGHLIN, a wealthy collector of Pittsburg, recently discovered a hoax in his gallery, and compelled a dealer to refund the $9,500 that had been paid for a $30 work of art.

Mr. Laughlin, as this episode shows, is a connoisseur of no mean ability. At a recent dinner he pointed out very brilliantly the limitations and the shallowness of "court painters."

"A movement was on foot for the alliance of King Charles of Wurttemberg and the Grand Duchess Olga of Russia. An emissary of the Russian court came to the young king, laid certain proposals before him, and submitted a portrait in oils of the royal lady.

"King Charles, after a close scrutiny, said:

"'This portrait flatters overmuch. The eyes are too large and brilliant, the hair too abundant, the complexion too flowerlike, and the neck and arms too beautiful altogether.'

"'But, your majesty,' said the astonished Russian, 'you do not know the grand duchess.'

"'No,' said the king, 'but I know court painters.'"